

## MEETING MINUTES OF UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL

Tuesday, April 18, 2023 at 2:30 p.m. in Gilmour Hall, Council Room (Room 111)

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- Attendance:** Dr. K. Dej (*Chair*), Dr. S. Bray, Dr. L. Carter, Dr. S. Corner, Dr. R. da Silva, Dr. S. Dickson-Anderson, Dr. C. Grisé, Dr. B. Marquis, Dr. S. McCracken, Dr. K. McGarry, Ms M. Pool, Dr. R. Whyte, Ms M. Zheng (*Associate University Secretary*), Ms K. Snow (*Assistant University Secretary*)
- Consultants:** Ms. L. Giordano, Ms. C. Mackenzie, Ms L. Maguire, Ms J. Osterman, Ms. S. Robinson, Mr. G. Rombough, Ms J. Simpson, Ms. C. Stevens, Ms L. Way
- Invited:** Dr. Anna Moro, *Director, MELD Programs*  
Ms Bev Pindar-Donnick, *Director of Administration, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences*  
Mr. Mark Fahmy and Mr. Ahmed Abdalla, *Undergraduate Student Representatives from Senate*
- Regrets:** Ms L. al-Arabi, Dr. T. Prowse
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### 1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – MARCH 21, 2023

It was duly moved and seconded,

**that the Undergraduate Council approve the minutes of the meeting held on March 21, 2023, as circulated.**

The motion was *Carried*.

### 2. BUSINESS ARISING

There was no business arising.

### 3. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Dr. Kim Dej, *Chair of Undergraduate Council*, noted that the Secretariat will be sending the UGC student representatives for approval by electronic vote to the Senate Executive Committee by the end of the summer or the first week of September. Associate and Assistant Deans are welcome to use the additional time to select student representatives to

UGC with availability on Tuesday afternoons. If this process had already happened, Dr. Dej encouraged the Faculty offices to inform the Secretariat.

#### **4. REPORT FROM THE AWARDS COMMITTEE**

Dr. Cathy Gris , *Chair of the Awards Committee*, presented the report.

An electronic vote was held between April 5<sup>th</sup> and April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, during which the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee approved the following Terms of Awards for recommendation to Undergraduate Council.

##### **a. Terms of Award**

- i. Proposed New Awards
- ii. Changes to Award Terms
- iii. Curriculum Changes in Award Terms
- iv. Proposed New Bursaries
- v. Changes to Bursary Terms
- vi. Awards/Academic Grants Removed from the Undergraduate Calendar
- vii. Name Changes
- viii. Award Value Changes

It was duly moved and seconded,

**that the Undergraduate Council approve one new award, three changes to award terms, two curriculum changes in award terms, one new bursary, changes to two bursary terms, and four awards or academic grants to be removed from the Undergraduate Calendar, as set out in the attached.**

The motion was *Carried*.

#### **5. REPORT FROM THE CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS COMMITTEE**

Dr. Karen McGarry, *Chair of the Certificates & Diplomas Committee*, presented the report. All the items contained in the report were presented for information only.

##### **a. Certificate of Attendance Programs**

###### **i. MODEL Certificate of Attendance**

At its meeting on April 4, 2023, the Certificates & Diplomas Committee received, for information, the MODEL Certificate of Attendance.

**ii. Anti-Black Racism and Critical Race Education Certificate of Attendance**

At the same meeting, the Certificates & Diplomas Committee also received, for information, the Anti-Black Racism and Critical Race Education Certificate of Attendance.

**b. Essentials: Professional Development Programming**

At the same meeting, the Certificates & Diplomas Committee received, for information, the establishment of two half day Essentials Courses and a title revision to one Essentials Course.

- i. New ½ Day Essentials Course, Tactical Humour: Leveraging the funny to build connections, camaraderie, and community (ESS-914)**
- ii. New ½ Day Essentials Course, SCARED SCRIPTLESS: Improv Bootcamp Presentation Skills Training (ESS-915)**
- iii. Course Title Revision: Exploring Modern-day Work and the Benefits of the Multi-Generational Workplace (ESS 821)**

**6. REPORT FROM THE CURRICULUM & ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE**

Dr. Sean Corner, *Chair of the Curriculum & Admissions Committee*, presented the report.

**a. Addenda to Curriculum Revisions for Inclusion in the 2023-24 Undergraduate Calendar**

An electronic vote was circulated to committee members on Friday to approve a minor curriculum revision for inclusion in the 2023-2024 Undergraduate Calendar. The Equity and Inclusion Office had created a consent module for first year students, which would be offered through the INSPIRE office. Course completion this year would be encouraged, with the intent to explore the possibility of making the course mandatory for first year students beginning in the 2024-2025 academic year. Dr. Dej added that there is no present desire to move this through governance until the implications of making the course mandatory could be understood more fulsomely.

It was duly moved and seconded,

**that the Undergraduate Council approve the addenda to curriculum revisions for inclusion in the 2023-2024 Undergraduate Calendar, as recommended by the Arts & Science Program.**

The motion was *Carried*.

**7. POLICY REVISIONS: POLICY ON REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK**

Dr. Dej facilitated a discussion on the proposed revisions to the Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work, which is the policy that governs submissions of the McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF). Dr. Dej spoke to the value of having such a policy, and added that the proposed changes aimed to address certain notable gaps and challenges. It was emphasized that policy alone was insufficient in dealing with some underlying causes of student stressors that have resulted in the increase of accommodation requests. In recognition of the administrative burden involved, Dr. Dej expressed the need for further faculty supports. These revisions were coming forward to Undergraduate Council as there was a sense that the absence forms were not wholly accomplishing what they were intended to.

A key concern raised during earlier discussions was the accumulation of work as the term progressed. This was the reason for introducing a 24-hour timeline to ensure students did not fall behind. The challenges faced by faculty members when multiple MSAF requests for the same assignment were granted had also been discussed, as it resulted in prolonged relief. The need for clear distinctions between Type A and Type B requests and stronger communications with students on this were also noted.

The revisions allow for two Type A requests per course and per term, with a third absence triggering the need to consult with one's Faculty advising office. There was concern expressed amongst members that allowing this would provide for a situation in which students could potentially request relief for up to 40% of their coursework, resulting in a scenario where a final exam or assignment could be worth an exceptionally large portion of their final grade. There was some disagreement amongst members on whether this would cause increased administrative burden on front-line staff. This could also mean that these students would only be tested on one part of a course, instead of the full course materials. This is not conducive to learning, or to an instructor being able to determine precisely what a student has learned.

The absence of a tool in MOSAIC or Avenue to Learn, through which advising units may be able to centrally track relief requests, issue warnings and directives for students to consult with their Associate Deans' offices, was also discussed at length. It would be helpful for such a tool to also identify patterns and provide analytics. There was some concern expressed that this could be pushing the problem down the road, instead of proactively assisting students. This would be a complex mechanism for the Registrar's Office to develop and implement by the time an approved version of the policy would take effect, and further discussions between the Registrar's Office, and Associate and Assistant Deans were likely necessary to investigate this further. It was also noted that the current system was created as a tracking tool, but it was not built to provide good data and inputs could often be inaccurate.

Education and communication with students would be crucial in ensuring that students understand fully the processes and felt encouraged to seek the proper guidance when needed. The Assistant Deans noted that this is a key concern, as students are often reluctant to seek the counsel of their advising office.

After a further, extensive discussion about the appropriate number of self-reported MSAFs students should be allowed before consulting with their advising offices, members eventually decided that it should be only one, and the policy should be amended to reflect this. Members also discussed the length of time that should be allowed to pass before a student must speak with their advising office and indicated that titles for each type of MSAF should be changed for clarity. The benefits and limitations of requiring documentation for absences were also considered, as well as the role of advisors in guiding students through the relief process. Student Senators who were invited as guests also brought up a few concerns regarding MSAF being used as a tool for time management and grace periods.

Dr. Dej acknowledged that the policy changes alone would not fully address the underlying issues and the motion was withdrawn so that changes could be made based on the feedback received. Members agreed to have it circulated instead as an electronic vote once changes have been made to reflect the discussion.

*Note: The Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work was approved via electronic vote on May 24, 2023. It had been withdrawn again for further revisions suggested by the Associate Deans Group, which included the following changes:*

- *Revised the name of the MSAF (Self-Reported) request to MSAF (Self-Report)*
- *Added the word 'Normally' to the beginning of the sentence "Normally, relief for missed work will not be provided for" (article 20)*
- *Revised article 20 (b) to read that relief for missed work may not be provided for more than two requests within a single term, instead of a single course*
- *Eliminated the language that suggested there were two separate tools for Self-Reports and Administrative Reports instead of the single tool in Mosaic*
- *Lowered the maximum cumulative value of missed work within a course from 40% to 35%*
- *Corrected contact information for the Honours Biology & Pharmacology Co-op Program Office*
- *Added the article "Supporting documentation may be required for an MSAF (Administrative Report)" to allow Faculty/Program offices to request documentation in extenuating circumstances*

## **8. IQAP CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEWS**

Ms Julianne Simpson provided an overview of the IQAP Cyclical Program Reviews. A member noted that some data may be missing from the School of Nursing.

This item was for information only.

**9. OTHER BUSINESS**

As there was no other business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.